

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

November 2010



Objective

To provide information concerning the Social Security Administration's (SSA) facilities management.

Background

In an August 6, 2010 letter, Congressman Sam Johnson requested that we provide information on the following.

-Does SSA have a comprehensive strategic plan with regard to its facilities? What facilities are included in the plan? Does the plan address current and future facility needs?

-Given the changing demographics, increased workloads, and technological advancements, what is the process and/or criteria used by SSA to determine: (1) the degree to which currently occupied space is being effectively utilized; (2) the type, number, and location of new facilities; and (3) placement of staff and/or equipment within all facilities?

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO/BEPDF/A-13-11-21110.pdf>

Congressional Response Report: The Social Security Administration's Facilities Management (A-13-11-21110)

Our Conclusion

Based on the information provided by SSA, we concluded the Agency has various processes, standards, plans, and assessments relative to management of its facilities. Specifically, Service Delivery Assessments and Space Allocation Standards assist the Agency in determining the (1) degree to which occupied space is used, (2) necessity for new offices or realignment/consolidation of existing offices, and (3) placement of staffing/equipment in SSA's facilities. Various factors are considered relative to the placement of staff and equipment, such as the budget, changing priorities, workloads, and productivity.

However, SSA does not have a single, comprehensive strategic plan that fully addresses the current and future needs for all its facilities. Neither the Deputy Commissioner for Operations (DCO) nor the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) had a written strategic plan relative to its facilities. These two components account for approximately 98 percent of SSA's facilities. Although the Office of Facilities Management maintained a Master Housing Plan (MHP) for Headquarters facilities, the MHP was a study, rather than a strategic plan or vision for the future.

ODAR and DCO have begun coordinating space requirements when opening new offices. However, there is an inherent risk that inefficiencies could occur, such as duplication of work, because SSA does not have an integrated, comprehensive long-term strategic plan. However, SSA does not agree with our assessment. SSA reported that while requirements differ for DCO and ODAR, these organizations work closely to plan for new space and co-location of the offices. The Agency reported DCO and ODAR consider demographics, projected variations in workloads, and new technologies in their planning. Further, SSA stated that co-location provides local area network access to ODAR offices previously housed in temporary space, and provides access to video service delivery equipment to both organizations.

SSA should also incorporate future technology into its strategic planning process with regard to facilities. SSA stated it considers technological advances in its planning to the extent possible. However, it is difficult to predict with absolute precision what those advances might be.